

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 087043

61

ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 USIA-12 PRS-01 SS-15 NSC-10 /071 R

DRAFTED BY AF/ C: SJHAMRICK: DJW

5/8/73 EXT 22216

APPROVED BY AF/ C - HERMAN J. COHEN

AF/ P - RPELTIER

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R 081940 Z MAY 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

UNCLAS STATE 087043

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PGOV, CG

SUBJECT: NEWSWEEK ARTICLE ON MOBUTU

1. MAY 14 ISSUE OF NEWSWEEK, WHICH APPEARED ON NEWSTANDS
MAY 7, CARRIES ARTICLE ON PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND ZAIRE.

2. FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT: QTE. COCK OF THE WALK --

BACK IN 1971 - A DECADE AFTER IT GAINED ITS INDEPEND-
ENCE FROM BELGIUM - THE CONGO BECAME ZAIRE AND ALL
CONGOLESE (OR ZAIROIS, AS THEY WERE HENCEFORTH CALLED)
WERE REQUIRED BY LAW TO SHED THEIR CHRISTIAN NAMES.
ZAIRE' S ENERGETIC LEADER LED THE WAY. BAPTIZED JOSEPH-
DESIRE MOBUTU, THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED ONE DAY THAT HE
WOULD BE KNOWN AS MOBUTU SESE SEKO KUKU- NGBENDU WA- ZA-
BANGA - OR, " MOBUTU THE PEPPERY, ALL- CONQUERING WARRIOR,
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BOAST FROM HIS NAME - BUT HE DID NOT DROP HIS MESSIANIC
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CULTURE MINISTER LAUNCHES A THREE- WEEK TOUR OF U. S. COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

AS MOBUTU SEES IT, AUTHENTICITY WAS AN ESSENTIAL STEP TO LIBERATE HIS COUNTRYMEN FROM INFERIORITY COMPLEXES BUILT UP DURING 75 YEARS OF OPPRESSIVE COLONIAL RULE AND TO EXPUNGE THE NIGHTMARE MEMORIES OF HIS NATION'S BLOODY FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENCE. , WE DO NOT WANT TO RETURN BLINDLY TO ALL OUR TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS," MOBUTU SAID RECENTLY IN AN INTERVIEW, " BUT MERELY TO CHOOSE THOSE WHICH CAN BEST BE ADAPTED TO MODERN SOCIETY. THE RECOURSE TO AUTHENTICITY HAS NO OTHER LIMIT TO REACH THE GOAL OF GIVING OUR COUNTRY ITS OWN PERSONALITY, ITS OWN CULTURE."

WHAT TROUBLES MANY AFRICAN OBSERVERS IS THAT THE AUTHENTICITY CAMPAIGN - FOR ALL THE PRIDE IT MAY HAVE KINDLED IN THE ZAIROIS - HAS ALSO INTENSIFIED A DISQUIETING MOBUTU CULT OF PERSONALITY. THE GOVERNMENT PRESS HAS TAKEN TO DUBBING MOBUTU " FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY" -- IGNORING THE NATION'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER, PATRICE LUMUMBA -- AND THE NIGHTLY TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM IN KINSHASA OPENS WITH AN IMAGE OF MOBUTU DRIFTING SERAPHLIKE TO CENTER SCREEN OUT OF A BANK OF CLOUDS. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS IDEOLOGUES HAVE CULTIVATED FOR MOBUTU THE IMAGE OF A TRADITIONAL TRIBAL CHIEFTAIN WHOSE EVERY EXCESS IS JUSTIFIED BY HIS LOFTY STATUS. AND MOBUTU'S EXCESSES ARE TRULY STAGGERING. ALTHOUGH HIS NATION HAS A PER CAPITA INCOME OF 90 DOLLARS A YEAR, HE OWN PALACES, COUNTRY ESTATES, LUXURIOUS RIVER YACHTS AND A FLEET OF CADILLAC AND MERCEDES- BENZ LIMOUSINES.

SPENDING SPREES: IN ADDITION TO HIS PENCHANT FOR LUXURY, MOBUTU HAS A VORACIOUS APPETITE FOR PROJECTS WITH STATUS. HE IS CAPTIVATED BY AIRPLANES: HE RECENTLY ORDERED 105 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF COMMERCIAL JETS - DESPITE THE FACT THAT AIR ZAIRE'S FLIGHTS DO NOT PAY THEIR WAY EVEN NOW. WHILE ZAIRE IS RICH IN COPPER AND MOBUTU HAS MANAGED TO LURE 174 MILLION DOLLARS OF AMERICAN INVESTMENT INTO THE COUNTRY, ECONOMISTS WARN THAT HIS SPENDING SPREES ARE OUTDISTANCING ZAIRE'S UNCLASSIFIED

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REVENUE. THE COUNTRY'S CREDIT RATING HAS FALLEN BADLY AS THE RATIO OF ZAIRE'S INSTALLMENT PAYMENTS ON FOREIGN DEBTS TO ITS EXPORT EARNINGS HAS CLIMBED FROM 6 TO 14 PER CENT. " WHEN IT REACHES 20," SAID ONE AMERICAN BANKER WHO HAS BEEN CLOSELY STUDYING ZAIRE'S INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL POSITION, " BELLS RING AND THE WORLD BANK GOES BANANAS."

MOBUTU HAS CAPITALIZED ON HIS AUTHENTICITY CRUSADE TO SHIFT HIS TRADITIONALLY PRO- WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY TO ONE OF RELATIVE NONALIGNMENT; MOST RECENTLY HE HAS BEGUN TO COURT CHINA. AFTER MANY YEARS OF DENOUNCING THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS, MOBUTU HAS NOW ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH PEKING. HE RETURNED FROM A RECENT VISIT TO CHINA WITH THE PROMISE OF A 100 MILLION DOLLARS INTEREST- FREE LOAN AND SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO APPLY MAOIST PRINCIPLES TO HIS AUTHENTICITY CAMPAIGN. HE DECREED A NEW PROGRAM OF SALONGO (WORK) IN WHICH EVERY ZAIROIS WAS TO LABOR WITHOUT PAY FOR EIGHT HOURS ON SATURDAY ON PROJECTS DESIGNATED BY THE GOVERNMENT. WHEN NEWSWEEK'S ANDREW JAFFE VISITED KINSHASA RECENTLY, MOST CITIZENS WERE IGNORING THE ORDER. BUT ONE GROUP WAS TOILING AWAY, SINGING NATIONALISTIC SONGS WHILE IT CLEANED UP GARBAGE ALONGSIDE A STREAM AT THE EDGE OF THE CAPITAL. " AS I DREW NEAR," JAFFE REPORTED, " I SAW HIDDEN IN A CULVERT THE INSPIRATION FOR THEIR LABORS: A GOVERNMENT TELEVISION TEAM RECORDING THE " AUTHENTIC" DONATION OF SALONGO." UNQTE. ROGERS

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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